

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 616

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL

UNCLAS QUEBEC 0091

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CA

SUBJECT: THREAT OF WIDENING LABOR UNREST IN QUEBEC

REF: QUEBEC 90 AND PREVIOUS

1. QUEBEC OBSERVERS ARE ANTICIPATING A WEEK OF INTENSE SOCIAL AND LABOR UNREST WHICH MAY CULMINATE FRIDAY, APRIL 30, EVE OF INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY, IN MASSIVE SHOW OF PROTEST INVOLVING NOT ONLY PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS, BUT THOSE FROM PRIVATE SECTOR AS WELL. IN AN APRIL 24 STRATEGY SESSION OF DELEGATES FROM QUEBEC'S THREE MAJOR UNION CENTRALS (QFL, CNTU, AND CEQL, A MAJOR EFFORT WAS MADE TO UNITE QUEBEC'S 350,000 PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS WITH THE 175,000 PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS - ALREADY ENGAGED IN A CONTRACT STRUGGLE WITH THE PROVINCIAL GOVT - IN A TOTAL BATTLE AGAINST " REPRESSIVE FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL LAWS ". CITING RECENTLY ENACTED LEGISLATION BY BOTH THE FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVTS, UNION LEADERS ACCUSED OTTAWA AND QUEBEC OF ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY THE UNION MOVEMENT AND RETALIATED BY DECLARING APRIL 30 AND MAY 1 " DAYS OF PROTEST " AND PROMISING TO LAUNCH JOINT ONE-DAY STRIKE ACTION EARLY IN MAY.

2. THE QFL, REPRESENTING SOME 280,000 MOSTLY PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS, WILL NOT BE IN A POSITION TO CALL A STRIKE OF ALL ITS MEMBERS BEFORE MAY 17, FOLLOWING A VOTE OF ITS MEMBERS. THE CNTU, WITH ITS 180,000 MEMBERS, EXPECTS TO BE ABLE TO CALL A

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STRIKE ONLY AFTER MAY 5. AN IMPORTANT PART OF THESE TWO

CENTRALS ARE SOME 150,000 CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, THE MAJORITY BELONGING TO THE QFL. THEY WILL BE WITHOUT CONTRACT APRIL 30 AND WILL PROBABLY TRY TO COORDINATE ACTION WITH THE COMMON FRONT IN ORDER TO PRESS CONTRACT DEMANDS.

3. COMMON FRONT ALREADY PLANNING ANOTHER 24-HR WALKOUT EARLY THIS WEEK, POSSIBLY APRIL 28 TO CORRESPOND WITH START OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST UNIONS CHARGED WITH DISOBEYING PROVISIONS OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND BACK-TO-WORK LAWS. LEADERS REPORTEDLY MAY EVEN CHOSE TO EXPAND ACTION TO TWO OR THREE-DAY WALKOUT.

4. PRIME MINISTER BOURASSA, SPEAKING APRIL 25 AT CLOSING OF PROVINCIAL LIBERAL PARTY CONGRESS, AGAIN LASHED OUT AT COMMON FRONT, REPEATING APRIL 23 PLEDGE THAT GOQ WILL NOT BE BLACKMAILED OR DETERRED BY THREATS OF UNLIMITED GENERAL STRIKE. HE ALSO PROMISED TO "REEVALUATE " RIGHT TO STRIKE OF HOSPITAL WORKERS, MEANING GOQ MAY BE PLANNING OTHER ANTI-STRIKE LEGISLATION - THIS TIME AFFECTING HOSPITAL WORKERS AS WELL.

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